

# The Alliance of Latin and English Studies

By

J. W. MACKAIL, LL.D.

Honorary Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY: ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1923

The substance of this paper was given as an address to joint meetings of the Branches of the Classical and English Associations at Oxford, Liverpool and Leeds in January and February, 1923.

## THE ALLIANCE OF LATIN AND ENGLISH STUDIES

IT is the first aim of the Classical Association to promote the well-being of classical studies in this country, and to secure their recognition and effective pursuit as an element in the national civilisation. Second only to that aim, and so intimately connected with it as to be really another side or aspect of the same thing, is another; to enforce the organic unity of these studies with the whole sphere of humane letters, and the unity of that sphere itself with others, with those of the physical sciences, of social and economic studies, and of the creative or interpretative arts.

The unity of education, now becoming more and more realised as the key to problems and the solution of conflicting claims, is the converse of the unity of life, individual and national. It is a unity which exists and should be recognised, as one may say, in three dimensions, not as only linear or superficial. Education should be continuous, from the elementary school to the university. It should not be confined to any social class. It should be an initiation into the whole world of human knowledge and human activity.

This was an ideal which was once, for the time being, translated into fact; or so at least it was believed. In the Middle Ages the universe was strictly limited, both in time and in space; so were its contents; and so likewise was the total sum of knowledge. In the thirteenth century a *Summa Theologiae* was actually produced by a single mind. That, no doubt, was the achievement of specialisation, of the concentration on scholastic philosophy which had narrowed down and even to a large degree crowded out the larger humanism of the twelfth century. But a *Summa Anthropologiae* was theoretically at least, then and long after, conceived of as equally possible. Even in the early seventeenth century, before the prodigious expansion of science which was about to take place, Bacon could speak of taking all knowledge for his province.

Can that ideal be restored? Can humanism in the fullest sense of the word be reinstated, with a new and a larger meaning? That is the question which lies at the basis of the whole theory and practice of education. In an age of increasing specialisation, at a time given over to the pursuit of short-cuts and the invention of substitutes, when the weight of accumulated knowledge, already greater than can be borne, is multiplying almost daily, can we recover that grasp of the unity of learning which is at once the symbol and the substantiation of a sense of the unity of life? If so, it is clear that the first thing to be done is to discard bodily the idea of competition of studies, and replace it by the idea of their co-operation and mutual reinforcement.

The antagonism between the so-called humanistic and the so-called scientific studies in the field of education, which a generation ago was so acute, is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Common ground was arrived at six years ago, with an agreement which removed the fundamental principle involved from the sphere of controversy. It is stated in the resolutions then unanimously adopted by the Joint Conference of the Council for Humanistic Studies and the Board of Scientific Societies. In effect, that concordat defined education as a single thing; that is to say, as the training of intelligence and character which befits the citizens of a free and civilised nation, concerned with the thoughts and acts of mankind as recorded in literature and history, and with the laws and processes of nature as ascertained and applied by science. By a long circuit, and after many divagations, we find ourselves returning to the old doctrine, but with an enlarged scope and fuller content. The Seven Liberal Arts were the legacy of the ancient world to the Middle Ages. That title was popularised, and brought into universal currency, by Martianus Capella about 500 A.D. Their content was the sum and substance of the whole of secular culture as it was then understood; and it included, in the *trivium* and *quadrivium* into which it was divided, the full sphere of humanistic and scientific studies.

So far, so good. But the spirit of competitive antagonism has shifted its ground, and sprung up, in some quarters with almost equal violence, within the field of humanistic studies themselves.

Among matters of controversy at the present day we may note (they are far, of course, from exhausting the list) the conflict between the professional representatives of ancient and modern languages; the claim put forward, not without attractive plausibility, on behalf of geography (which is both a scientific and a humanistic subject) as covering in its largest sense nearly the whole field of education; and the still more widely urged claim for English studies as giving complete humanism, or at least all the humanism that is attainable or required.

These subjects are dealt with at large, and pursued into much detail, in the *Reports* of the three Government Committees on Classics, English, and Modern Languages. I may assume in this audience a general knowledge of these *Reports*, even where they have not been thoroughly mastered or subjected to detailed analysis. Even a superficial acquaintance with them is sufficient to shew that, starting from different points, they reach different conclusions. Perhaps they can, largely at all events, be brought into harmony. But it would be idle to say that they do not require to be brought into harmony, or that they do not here and there, either expressly or by implication, take sharply conflicting views. The particularist or competitive view is specially to be noted in the attitude taken up in the Modern Language Committee's *Report* towards Latin. More than once it is spoken of as though it were the enemy. 'Latin should not be compulsory in any part of a Public School' (§ 122). 'It may be hoped to rid schools of the burden of compulsory Latin' (§ 124). 'Latin should not be allowed to imperil the success of French' (§ 132). The words 'burden' and 'compulsory' are both invidious, and meant to raise, or to confirm, a prejudice. It would lead to clearer thinking if for 'burden' were substituted 'discipline,' and for 'compulsory,' 'essential.' The implication in the phrases actually used in the *Report* is that in an organised system of education, Latin either (1) does not matter one way or the other, or (2) is something, like the piano, that is to be regarded as an extra, not as an organic element. But the last of the three sentences quoted contains a fallacy still more dangerous; for it rests on a fundamental misconception of the object of education. That object is, as is sometimes forgotten, to educate. 'The success of French' is to be measured by the

degree to which the time and effort spent on it have helped towards developing, training, mobilising for active exercise, the latent capacities of the whole nature, intellectual and moral. You only imperil success, in its real sense, by looking to some immediate by-product. The object to be kept in view is not the success of French, or for that matter, the success of Latin, but the success of education.

Between English and Latin also there has been raised a certain amount of this artificial and unfortunate competition. It has been mainly raised in the field of university studies; but, here as elsewhere, universities and secondary schools are organic members of the body of higher education. The controversy has been conducted in the main with good temper on both sides; but it is serious enough to make it very necessary to examine the matter, and to see whether, in the interest not of Latin nor of English but of education as a whole, of national culture and large citizenship, the conflicting doctrines may not coalesce in a larger synthesis.

In such an enquiry, we may neglect the extremists on both sides. There are still a few reactionaries who think—or at least who say—that to Latin as the staple of humane education all that needs to be added is Greek. And there are some enthusiasts for English studies who say—or at least who think—that the Latin influence has only been an alien and disturbing element in the English language and literature; that *Beowulf* is more important, both for linguistic and for literary study, than *Paradise Lost*, and (as I have heard it boldly put) that English, as a subject of serious study, came to an end in the fourteenth century. But the whole body of rational opinion is, I think, converging on the view that Latin and English studies are complementary; that they reinforce and vitalise one another in the most powerful way; and that, as their union in history created the language which we use and the literature from which we draw our spiritual sustenance, so their union in education supplies, for the individual and for the nation, the core of humanism.

For an education consisting of nothing but Latin and Greek there is neither justification nor excuse. But (except possibly in a few highly conservative preparatory schools: so, whether rightly or wrongly, it is alleged) such an education does not exist.

On the other hand, past neglect of the mother-tongue and of our native literature in English education excuses, although it does not justify, the excessive claims made for this study as all-inclusive and self-sufficing. Once more it must be repeated: what we have to look to is not the interest of a subject, be that subject what it may. It is the interest of the human beings concerned, as individuals and as a community; it is the development of their powers and capacities, of their understanding of life and their control over it; it is their mental and spiritual enfranchisement. As regards secondary schools, this position hardly requires defence. But a university likewise, while its students will all to a greater or less degree specialise in their course of studies, does not exist for the purpose of breeding specialists. It has, or ought to have, a larger function; that of nurturing and sending out into the world, equipped and trained, the best type of citizens, citizens of their own country and of the world. It can only keep itself free from the sterilising effects of a narrow specialisation, by keeping prominent, in theory and in practice, the unity of knowledge, the interdependence and co-ordination of studies.

This is why it is so important that Associations formed to promote different branches of study should keep in close touch with one another, and why joint meetings of the local branches of two or more such Associations are of such high value, both as a symbol of common aims and interests besides those specially attaching to each, and as helping towards mutual understanding and harmonised action through the discussions—even, it may be, through the minor controversies—which they carry on. And this is so very specially and very obviously in the province of the two branches of humanistic study which we are considering to-day.

Let me then here cite some apposite sentences from the *Reports* of the Prime Minister's Committees on Classics and on English, to shew how nearly, in this matter, they speak with one voice; how strongly the correlation and interdependence of Latin and English studies impressed itself on both Committees in the result of their investigations and of the evidence submitted to them.

'We regard Latin as of great and almost irreplaceable value as a means of promoting the proper use of the English language, both in speech and writing, by all classes of the community.'

‘All our experts recognise that Latin provides an incomparable discipline for modern linguistic studies.’

(*Classics Committee's Report*, pp. 11 and 17.)

‘A knowledge of Latin civilisation is indispensable for the full understanding of the languages, law and society of a great part of Europe, including the British isles.’

‘We see in the classics sources of our own language, our own art, our own experience, and we hold that no student of English will have completed his exploration or gained all its advantages, until he has ascended the stream of literature and discovered these perennial sources for himself.’

(*English Committee's Report*, paragraphs 8 and 12.)

Noting then these theoretic conclusions, and attaching to them the weight which they deserve, yet not proposing them to ourselves or to others for blind acceptance, let us turn from them to facts.

The correlation or interfusion of Latin and English studies is, as an aim consciously and deliberately pursued in our educational system, a thing of comparatively recent growth. So far as it has gone, it has been of great value to both; and there appears no reason to doubt that, as it develops further, its value to both may be greatly increased.

The most obvious benefit of the conjunction has been to Latin. Latin had, through artificial isolation, and intensive study too early and too exclusively pursued in the textual and grammatical field, become partly sterilised or atrophied. There was some ground for calling it a dead language. I may note here in passing, that the same danger exists for English. It too is capable of being made a dead language. ‘It would be a grave misfortune,’ as the English Committee's *Report* (paragraph 7) justly points out, ‘if a defect of method which has proved injurious in Latin and Greek were to appear also in the teaching of English literature’; and co-ordination of the two studies helps largely to secure that the defect shall be avoided in both alike.

But now, we may say of Latin (1) that the scientific study of language as an operative function and a live organism has brought it about that there is no such thing as a dead language; all languages being actual live embodiments of language, and Latin



being such an embodiment of peculiarly intense vitality: (2) that the same holds good of the scientific study of literature, all literature (and Latin literature eminently so) being the live expression of human thought, imagination, emotion and experience: and (3) that under this quickening impulse Latin language and literature are now studied not abstractly as a gymnastic, like a sort of mathematics—though that abstract or technical study is not without its educational value, and a rational claim may be made for it as an intellectual exercise and a stringent mental drill—but as keys, or rather perhaps we might say windows, admitting to the spectacle and lesson of human history, of what mankind at its highest has thought and felt and done, and to the mechanism through which human thought, feeling and action are most perfectly expressed or recorded.

But the benefit of the conjunction is no less important to English studies; and this is becoming better realised, though the conjunction itself is not yet fully accepted, still less is fully attained. The introduction of new studies into a long-established system is never quite a simple thing; it involves some disturbance of habits, some risk of friction and misunderstanding. Schools or faculties of English in the universities were initiated under difficulties. Excessive claims of enthusiasts clashed with the passive, if not the active, opposition of conservatism. It was urged that a school of English was a soft option; that it meant dilettantism and ‘chatter about Harriet.’ In order to counter that charge, artificial bones, as one might call them, were rather awkwardly inserted into the scheme of study. Moeso-Gothic was included in the linguistic study of English, though the Italic dialects are not regarded as a necessary part of the study of Latin. And more largely, the tendency was to treat English, both the language and the literature, as Teutonic, and divide it sharply from the languages and literature of the Latin nations, and from the Latin which was their common source.

It is true that English is a native product, an insular growth, with a continuous history of its own. But of that history the Latin influence is an essential part. The noble Icelandic prose of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was insular in the full sense; it derived nothing from Rome; it was outside of the European movement, to which in turn it contributed, until quite

recent times, nothing whatever. England, though not exactly in Europe, was never disconnected from Europe. For nearly a thousand years the connexion has been close and fertile. European prose, as a fine art, is a Latin creation; it is the prose of Cicero, the vehicle which the Roman genius gave to the world. The structure of organised and fully civilised English prose is essentially Latin. The Latin influence in our poetry is still more patent: 'the descent of poetry,' in Gray's well-known words, 'is from Greece to Italy and from Italy to England.' 'Italy' in that sentence includes both the earlier and the later product of the Latin genius, both Latin and Italian poetry. Virgil is the culmination of the former and the inspiring source of the latter.

It is worth remarking here, that what has tended to make Latin and English studies drift apart is our loss of touch with Italian literature. Dante and Boccaccio were the creators, it might almost be said, of modern poetry and prose, including our own from Chaucer downwards. It is needless to mention as sources Petrarch for the English lyric, Ariosto for Spenser, Tasso and Guarini for the whole of English poetry of the seventeenth century. But all those writers were the inheritors and recoverers of the Latin tradition. Both in prose and in poetry, of course, the Latin influence reached us very largely through France; and for this as well as for other reasons, knowledge and study of French is essential towards any scholarly study of English; this however is so obviously true and so fully recognised as hardly to need mention.

But the point on which I wish to lay particular stress is apart from any indirect transmission; it is the enormous importance of the direct Latin influence. Cicero and Virgil I have already named. Quintilian is a live force, not only for the arts of literary composition and criticism, but for the whole theory and practice of education. Livy and Tacitus are masters and models for historians. Ovid has been, even more powerfully, the master and model in narrative poetry from Chaucer onwards. Horace, perpetually imitated and perpetually inimitable, is almost, one might say, an English poet. Seneca and Plautus are more important than the Attic dramatists in the historical evolution of the English drama. There is no need to labour the point that alike for the linguistic and the literary study of English, Latin is

essential, whether we have regard to grasp of organised syntax, to the laws of structural composition, or to appreciation of artistic form. Nor was it ever more essential than it is now, when English studies are menaced by a new peril, not that of particularism and over-specialisation, but that of diversion to merely vocational or commercial purposes. It is a safeguard against the tendency to convert schools of English into schools of journalism. With a school of journalism as such we need have no quarrel. It is what it purports to be. But it is a technical or vocational training, not a course of humanistic and liberal education.

There is however another point, often ignored or slurred over, in which the conjunction of Latin with English studies bears directly and vitally on English literature in both its aspects, as regards appreciation and as regards production, as an art studied and an art practised. That is the reference of literature to a standard.

It is acknowledged that our own literature, while immensely rich, is chaotic: that it is, and always has been, to some extent undisciplined. Structure, logic, clarity are not its strong points. The national genius, in this as in other respects, has been to muddle along and to muddle through. And conversely, we up to the present have never had, or never had at least since the Middle Ages, any system of national education, or any thought-out co-ordination of the whole field of human studies. Our culture—including science as well as letters—has, like our empire, grown up casually, more or less at random, in a habit (not a fit) of absence of mind. Successive fields have been attached to it, if one should not rather say dumped upon it, finding a place where they could, sometimes displacing or cramping others for no particular reason. Each, so far as it has aimed at a standard at all, has had to form a standard for itself, slowly and imperfectly. The examination incubus itself has perhaps been to some extent a disguised blessing, inasmuch as it involved a serious effort to secure some sort of equivalence both in amount and even, so far as practicable, in quality, of the work required to qualify for degrees or other symbols of proficiency.

The absence in our civilisation of any English Academy was noted long ago not indeed as a cause, but as a collateral sign, of the lack among us of a standard for English as for modern

humanistic studies generally. It is likewise an old remark, that the tradition of classical education in our universities and public schools did in fact, to a considerable degree, supply that want. In this contention there was a good deal of truth. But the particular point I would emphasise here is this: that while even for the study of English as a matter of pure linguistic the discipline and tradition of Latin are of high value, for the English language as a vehicle of thought and an instrument for use, and for English literature throughout, Latin sets a standard as nothing else does, not even Greek. For long it did so quite consciously. It set up, as a goal to be kept in view and more and more nearly reached by continued effort, classic quality; and in particular, the Latin qualities of precision, gravity, dignity. English literature was formed and moulded through centuries of assiduous study of Latin, and through constant translation from Latin, in both the senses of the word translation. Translation (or transference) of quality took effect through the exercise of the habit and art of translation in its more limited and more customary sense.

In this last we may trace stages of progress and changes of aim, theoretically distinct though in practice they overlap and intermingle and combine, and though no one of them has ever existed free from intermixture with the others. From Bede and Alfred onwards, translation from Latin into English was practised towards what may be called the making of English; the making it, that is to say, into a competent instrument, a practicable vehicle, of consecutive thought and organised expression. Later, though still at what is from our point of view an early period, translations assumed their chief importance as a means of getting at what was called, in a compendious phrase which has not even now lost its meaning, 'the wisdom of the ancients,' of making the secrets of knowledge accessible. Later still, we come to the great age of translations from the Latin, the seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries, when the object became more and more to fix and heighten a standard for English, and thus, as well as by other means, to get English fully incorporated with the Republic of Letters. This aim is very clearly brought out in the collateral practice (often carelessly dismissed as an eccentricity or a folly) of translating English original works into Latin. The Latin versions, to name a few outstanding instances,

made in the seventeenth century of *Troilus and Criseyde*, of the *Faithful Shepherdess*, of the *Paradise Lost*, were not mere idle pedantry. They had a real meaning, namely, to bring English literature under the test of a classical standard. And conversely, the innumerable translations from Latin into English, while they often had other objects as well, were meant to establish that standard, as one to be aimed after and attained, whatever else might be added to it, in original English writing.

The many phases through which the practice of translation from Latin has passed, the varied uses which it has served, should make us alert to realise that the usefulness of translations themselves is very limited. The results come from the art or exercise of translating, not from the translations, which are transitory products. I mention this, though it is sufficiently obvious, in order to point out the fallacy in the popular doctrine that the value of Latin—or for that matter, of Greek—can be got out of translations. A translation, like a photograph of a painting, or the piano-score of an orchestral symphony, can give much, though not perhaps, even at its best, so much as these. It does not give, it does not even pretend to give, the thing itself. This is true for ordinary appreciation, but doubly true for advanced study.

In other quarters again, the divorce of Latin and English studies is defended by an argument which involves a subtler, and therefore perhaps a more dangerous fallacy. 'We do not believe,' says the *Report* of the English Committee, 'that those who have not studied the classics or any foreign literature must fail to win from their native English a full measure of culture and humane training.' Curiously, this sentence comes within a few lines of the other sentence in that *Report* which I have already quoted: 'We see in the classics sources of our own language, our own art, our own experience, and we hold that no student of English will have completed his exploration or gained all its advantages until he has ascended the stream of literature and discovered these perennial sources for himself.' The two statements seem not quite consistent: and if in view of this we examine the former carefully, we shall find that it contains more than one ambiguity. It is not clear whether by 'must fail' we are to understand 'do in fact fail.' It is not clear

whether by 'a full measure of culture' is meant anything more than 'a large measure of culture'—which of course no one would think of denying. But these are perhaps rather of the nature of debating points, and not really material. The substantial ambiguity is in the words 'native English.' What is our native English? It consists of a language and literature saturated with Latin, moulded into their actual shape by continuous Latin influence. Neither scientifically nor historically nor culturally is English a thing self-contained and isolable. The study of English, in each and all of these three aspects, requires for its effective conduct immediate direct knowledge of Latin as an influencing force, an organic element. For its advanced study, that knowledge must be not only direct, but wide and accurate. Linguistically it was the Latin language itself, culturally it was the Latin classics themselves, that were the motive force, the organic factor, in national development.

And conversely; study of Latin that is not to risk landing itself in pedantry and sterility, or at least to be narrowed into a mere intellectual exercise, requires, from the first and throughout, to be organically connected with the study of English. Knowledge is needed of the links and fibres which connect Latin vitally with our own language and thought, our own history and civilisation. It is not merely that there are daily lessons to be learned from Roman history, from the aims and methods, the achievements and failures of Rome. There is a still greater gain, to get into vital contact with the Roman mind and temper. Pure or abstract scholarship is an ideal, if it be one,—and I should be the last to undervalue it—only for a few exceptional people. To be largely useful, it must be embodied; it must be brought into contact with actual speech and thought and with what they express: even more than that, with what they create. For language is, in one form or another, the motive force towards all action, and towards all production. Classical scholars have somehow fallen short, have missed something of what scholarship can give, if it has not given them a standard in accuracy of thinking, in capacity of expressing, in faculty of persuading; and if they have not translated that standard into practice, in the conduct of life and the exercise of citizenship.

The claim for co-ordination, or even in a sense for fusion, of English and Latin studies, for their organic unity in the sphere of liberal education, is inherent, if we think of it, in the very name of the classics. The classics, in the proper sense of the term, are not anything written in Latin or Greek; they are what, in these or other languages, has been best written, so written as to create and fix a standard. They are peaks that signal to one another. Their standard is that of perfection; some kind of perfection, to fall short of which, in that kind, is not to be a classic. The mistake used to be made of thinking not merely that all the kinds of perfection that mattered were those, and nothing more than those, which were exemplified in the writings of ancient Latin and Greek authors: but further, that these were not exemplified elsewhere. And, as one mistake leads to another, it came to be assumed, in a confused sort of way, that anything written in what had come to be called the classical languages, in Greek or Latin, was a classic in virtue of that fact. That attitude led straight off into classicism. Insistence on the value of the classical standard is not a plea for classicism. Goethe, in well-known and highly provocative words, said 'The classic is health, the romantic disease.' Classicism is also a disease; or if we dislike that word, we may call it a 'culture' in the pathological sense of that term, which infects the constitution and growth of literature. The coalition of English and Latin studies is one of the surest safeguards against the evils of classicism, as well as against the greater evil, lowering of standard or even loss of any sense of standard at all. If we smile at Goethe's dictum, we ought to remember that when he uttered it, there were broadly speaking no German classics; German literature was a welter, partly because it had never gone to school to Rome. In English, there are the classics of romanticism.

The history of the terms 'the classics' and 'classical,' and of the fluctuations in their meaning is itself a study of much interest and of no little intricacy, and one which incidentally is extremely instructive. 'The classics' in the ordinary current usage, is a term of comparatively modern origin. As early as 1607, 'the classical authors' is found, apparently, not quite certainly, meaning Latin and Greek authors. The usage however did not become established until a century later. Addison's celebrated

phrase of 'classic ground' in his *Letter from Italy* wavers between the two senses. The earliest citation of 'the classics' in its modern meaning given in the *New English Dictionary* is dated 1711. In the sixth century A.D. *classicus* meant 'a student' in the general sense, and the studies it connoted were those included in the circle of the seven liberal arts: but throughout the Middle Ages, Latin (there was no Greek) was usually spoken of as *grammatica*, 'grammar.' At the revival of learning many phrases came into use for what we call classical studies, no one of them with exclusive authority or even marked predominance over others: *humanitatis studia*, *vetus eruditio*, *bonae literae*, *optima studia*, *literae humaniores*. This last, the favourite phrase but not, I think, the invention of Erasmus, still survives at Oxford, though now with an altered content; and in some at least of the Scottish Universities, the older title of the Chair of Humanity is not quite displaced by that of the Professorship of Latin. In the Founder's Statutes for Magdalen College, Oxford (1458), the subjects of study prescribed, other than theological, are the *artes humanitatis*. It was in respect of these that the Degree in Arts was given. There are degrees now, as there are university courses, of many kinds and many names; but that a degree in Arts should be given to students who have never qualified in Latin at any stage and who may never whether at school or college have learned any Latin at all, is a thing which we may reasonably regret where it exists, and justifiably oppose where it is suggested.

The modern contraction or specialisation of usage is perhaps unfortunate, though it has its conveniences. But there is this much in it (to set Greek aside for the moment, and think only, as we are now doing, of Latin), that Latin *as a whole*, over a period of something like six hundred years, has certain really classical qualities, characteristic of it throughout, only fully realised in the real classics, but imparting themselves to some degree to inferior or un-classic work as well: in particular, a wonderful weight and precision. This may be estimated both by trying to turn pieces of what we would call good average English into Latin, and by trying to express the same substantial thought in both languages, and noting how slack the texture of the English as compared with that of the Latin is under that test.



This is in fact one important lesson to be learned—there are others as well—from the practice of what is called, oddly, composition; the turning of given English, that is to say, into Latin. This is sometimes fancied to be a mere trick, and a waste of time. But, if properly handled, it is an exercise of which there is more likely to be too little than too much. It is of extraordinary value towards forming a habit of precise thinking. I speak of prose, not verse composition: the making of verses in our own or any other language we are trying to master is also a valuable exercise in management of words to the best advantage, and in appreciation of words so managed; but that is rather a different thing.

The main point, however, to which I would return from this digression is, that the Latin language, and the literature in which Latin most fully realised itself, are not only large sources of our own language and literature; are not only germinal forces still working in English as they have done for a thousand years; but give, in important matters, a fixed, high, and permanent standard of what may be called perfection, of a quality, that is to say, which is perfectly satisfying, and beyond which nothing else has gone or can be imagined as going. English studies must still be pursued with this standard kept in view. Without this coalescence and interpenetration of studies, it can hardly be hoped to get full appreciation of what constitutes, in our own mother-tongue or elsewhere, classical quality in the true sense of the term: still less to look for that quality, to require it, to attain it in the actual use of language, spoken and written; that is as much as to say, in the conduct of life on a fully civilised plane.

The standard is best held in view if we keep returning for it to a separate body of literature, and to a language which though not our own, is, or may become, for us almost a second mother-tongue. It can be elicited, no doubt, out of the enormous mass of English literature itself; but only with much difficulty, the mass is so great and the mixture in it so great likewise. Also, such of it as belongs to our own day and fills our foreground is too close to us to make it easy to abstract qualities from it and appraise them at their true value. The bulk of every one's English reading, and the whole of one's English writing, is necessarily of this kind; and by far the greater part of the

English now being written and read is, to use the old and expressive phrase, 'in the vulgar tongue.' It has not what, six hundred years ago, Dante re-created and named, the *bello stile*.

Dante knew quite well that he was re-creating poetry. He says so, in so many words, in the *Purgatorio*: *Qui la morta poesia risurga*. Human language has in fact never been used with greater elevation and splendour. Yet to him it was doubtful whether any language but Latin (he did not know Greek) was good enough for the greatest literature whether in prose or verse. Latin alone was *perpetuo e non corruttibile*, alone was *souvrano e per nobiltà e per virtù e per bellezza*.

When Dante wrote thus, he was himself a classic, and was creating modern literature. He could not foresee its developments. But he realised, as we shall still do well to realise, how long a way there was to go before the *bello stile* of Latin could be reached in other languages. *Componimento in stile mezzano* is his paraphrase of the name *Commedia* which he gave to his own poem. The growth of the forest since then could not have taken place—at all events, it did not—but for its drawing nutriment continuously from the ancient soil. Language and literature are one thing, as history is one evolution. They are the vehicle, the manifestation, the record of the spirit of man. That is what is meant by humanism.

In what I have put before you, I have purposely dealt with the *media axiomata* of the subject, not with particular methods of putting them into application. In what ways, by what devices, English and Latin studies can be co-ordinated to the best effect, here or elsewhere, in schools and in universities, is matter for careful discussion among experts and practising teachers or organisers. The considerations I have urged are preliminary. Discussions may be largely futile if they do not start from some concordat, from a common ground of accepted fundamental principles. For their conduct, joint meetings of those who represent more particularly the interests of cognate studies—and all studies are cognate—are of great value, and I hope they may become habitual. Particularism of studies is a perpetual danger. But to overcome it is not beyond the wit of man. It is largely due, so every one agrees, to the pressure of the examination

system. There is no need to enlarge on this: the disease has been diagnosed often enough; the problem of its cure has yet to be solved. But the cure will not be effected by tinkering with machinery: all parties concerned must have, from their different points of approach, a common aim in view, the consolidation of humanism, the reinstatement of the commonwealth of studies. It will be sufficient for the moment if I have convinced you, or rather have strengthened your conviction, that close vital contact of Latin and English studies is for the advantage of both, and what is still more important, for the advantage of a large, liberal, deeply-rooted humanism, pursued on scientific method, and remote alike from shallow dilettantism and narrow pedantry.

